

EPA Approves Iowa's Water Quality Standards

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DES MOINES — The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has approved Iowa's new water quality standards, adding protection to thousands of miles of Iowa streams and rivers.

The new standards add protection for recreational uses on 23,800 miles of stream and for aquatic life on 14,000 miles of stream.

“These changes allow us to better protect Iowa's rivers and streams,” said Adam Schnieders, who works with water quality standards for the DNR. “This additional protection applies to streams that were minimally protected for recreation or for supporting aquatic life in the past, and will result in many wastewater treatment plants having to comply with more stringent discharge limits on a number of streams.”

As required by the Clean Water Act, the DNR submitted new and revised standards to the EPA in early 2006 and late 2007. Main changes to the previous water quality standards include:

- All of Iowa's perennial rivers and streams (as well as intermittent streams with perennial pools) that before did not have a stream use designation are now protected for primary contact recreation use, like swimming, and aquatic life, unless stream assessments show they can not support these uses.
- Revising the criteria necessary to protect aquatic life and human health uses considering the latest science.
- Adding more protection to streams by more accurately determining stream flows.
- Adding protection to streams where the majority of the flow is created by discharge from a wastewater treatment plant.

With the EPA's approval, the DNR is now able to implement the new standards for the state of Iowa.